by this false reasoning: nothing prevents me from working as much today.

(f) Reading of second-rate or definitely bad works; recognize the enemy and exaggerate the danger. Let your hatred of them urge you to work. (Powerful means, but more dangerous than emulation.)

2. Physical means (all doubtful):

(1) Eat little.

(2) Keep your extremities very warm.

(3) Do not sleep too much (seven hours are enough).

(4) Never try to urge yourself on at the moment of writing by either reading or music; or else choose an ancient author and read, with the proper attitude of piety, only a few lines. The ones I choose in such a case are always the same: Virgil, Molicre, and Bach (read without the aid of the piano); Voltaire's *Candide;* or, for quite different reasons, the first volumes of Flaubert's *Corrcspondance* or Balzac's *Lcttrcs d sa sceur*.

In my room a low bed, a little space, a wooden upright with a broad horizontal board elbow-high, a small square table, a hard straight chair. I create lying down, compose walking up and down, write standing up, copy out sitting down. These four positions have become almost indispensable to me.

I should not cite myself as an example if I did not find it very difficult getting to work. I readily imagine that anyone else works more easily than I and tell myself that, consequently, anyone else could have done just as well what I have done; this allows me the better to scorn. I have never been fundamentally convinced of my superiority over anyone else; this is how I succeed in reconciling a great deal of modesty with a great deal of pride.

(e) Be well. Have been ill.

In the workroom no works of art or very few and very serious ones:

(no Botticelli) Masaccio, Michelangelo, Raphael's *School of Athens;* but preferably a few portraits or death-masks: Dante, Pascal, Leopardi, the photograph of Balzac, of . . .

No books other than dictionaries, Nothing must distract or charm. Nothing must rescue you from boredom except your work,

Never indulge in politics and almost never read the newspapers, but never lose an opportunity to talk politics with anyone whatsoever. This will not teach you anything about the *res publica,* but it will inform you admirably as to the character of the people you talk with.

Imagination (in my case) rarely precedes the idea; it is the latter, and never the former, that excites me. But the latter without the former